

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0394

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECIN,XL

SUBJ: BARBADOS CLOTHING MANUFACTURERS UPSET OVER JAMAICAN
AND GUYANESE IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

1. DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER JAMAICAN AND GUYANESE RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTATION OF TEXTILES, INCLUDING THOSE FROM FELLOW CARICOM STATES, LEADERS OF THE LOCAL TEXTILE INDUSTRY HAVE LAUNCHED A PRESS CAMPAIGN TO DRAMATIZE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SUCH RESTRICTIONS ON THE BARBADIAN ECONOMY AND TO ENLIST THE SUPPORT OF BARBADIANS NOT DIRECTLY AFFECTED. LOCAL GARMENT INDUSTRY SOURCES HAVE TOLD THE PRESS THAT GOJ AND GOG IMPORT RESTRICTIONS COULD COST THEIR INDUSTRY UP TO 900 OF ITS 3000 PLUS JOBS. (APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT OF THE CLOTHING PRODUCED IN BARBADOS IS EXPORTED, NEARLY ALL TO OTHER CARIBBEAN STATES.)

2. EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE THREAT OF LAYOFFS HAS TAKEN GUYANA AND JAMAICA TO TASK--ALBEIT MORE WITH SADNESS THAN REAL ANGER--FOR VIOLATING THE SPIRIT OF THE RECIPROCAL OBLIGATIONS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION. THE ISSUE HAS ALSO OCCASIONED A NEW ROUND OF PUBLIC SPECULATION OVER THE FUTURE OF CARICOM AND REGIONALISM GENERALLY. THE CONSENSUS SEEMS TO BE THAT PROGRESS ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION IS RETROGRADE.

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3. COMMENT: CARICOM SUPPORTERS HERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HARD-PRESSED

TO EXPLAIN WHY BARBADIANS SHOULD BUY INFERIOR CARICOM PRODUCTS AT HIGHER PRICES IN PREFERENCE TO HIGHER QUALITY NON-CARICOM PRODUCTS AT LOWER COST. HERETOFORE THEY'VE BEEN ABLE TO CITE PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO CARICOM MARKETS FOR BARBADIAN EXPORTERS (AS WELL AS ANTICIPATED FUTURE BENEFITS). HOWEVER WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUYANESE AND JAMAICAN RESTRICTIONS, THIS ARGUMENT LOSES MUCH OF ITS EFFECTIVENESS. THE FUTURE OF CARICOM AND BARBADIAN PARTICIPATION IN IT COULD PROVE TO BE AN ISSUE IN THE ISLAND'S NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS, ESPECIALLY AS OPPOSITION BARBADOS LABOR PARTY LEADER J.M.G. "TOM" ADAMS TOLD EMBOFFS NOT LONG AGO HE BELIEVES THAT CARICOM DISCRIMINATES AGAINST THE SMALLER ISLANDS, INCLUDING BARBADOS.
BRITTON

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